

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
FEA-01 ACDA-07 IO-13 EB-08 NRC-05 OES-07 ERDA-05
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R 091830Z AUG 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6902
INFO USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARIS 23164

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT FR MILI
SUBJECT: DEFENSE DEBATE INTENSIFIES IN UNION OF THE LEFT

REF: PARIS 21872

SUMMARY: THE INTERNAL UNION OF THE LEFT DEBATE OVER
QUESTIONS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE POLICY CONTINUES TO
PRODUCE AUGUST'S MOST EXCITING POLITICAL FIREWORKS.
COMMUNIST (PCF) LEADER GEORGES MARCHAIS, IN STATEMENTS
AUGUST 3 AND 9, HAS FOCUSSED HIS CRITICISM ON
SOCIALIST (PS) PROPOSALS FOR A REFERENDUM ON THE FRENCH
NUCLEAR FORCE WHILE CONTINUING TO VOICE SUSPICION OVER
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LATENT "ATLANTICIST" TENDENCIES OF HIS PS PARTNERS.
PS FIRST SECRETARY FRANCOIS MITTERRAND HAS QUESTIONED
THE LOGIC OF PCF PROPOSITIONS WHICH WOULD REDUCE THE
DETERRENT CREDIBILITY OF THE FORCE AND, IN SOCIALIST
EYES, MOVE FRANCE TOWARD A POSITION OF ARMED NEUTRALITY
OUTSIDE OF THE EXISTING ALLIANCE STRUCTURE. WHILE THE
DEBATE ITSELF HAS BEEN USEFUL IN CLARIFYING PCF AND PS

DEFENSE POSITIONS, IT HAS ALSO PUBLICALLY PINPOINTED REAL DISCREPANCIES WHICH SEPARATE THE TWO SIDES. END SUMMARY.

1. POLEMICS ANYONE?: THE CURRENT ROUND OF SOCIALIST/ COMMUNIST POLEMICIZING WAS LAUNCHED AUGUST 3 WHEN PCF LEADER MARCHAIS ACCUSED MITTERRAND OF WEAKENING LEFT CREDIBILITY BY REFUSING TO TAKE A CLEAR POSITION ON THE FATE OF THE FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE (PROPOSING INSTEAD A NATIONAL REFERENDUM AT SOME UNDEFINED TIME AFTER NEXT MARCH). PS AND LEFT RADICAL (MRG) SPOKESMEN COUNTER-ATTACKED IMMEDIATELY, CALLING MARCHAIS "OUT OF PHASE" FOLLOWING HIS JULY VACATION AND ACCUSING HIM OF RENEGING ON COMPROMISE POSITIONS ALREADY AGREED TO BY PCF NEGOTIATORS. GOING STILL FURTHER, THE PS QUESTIONED THE COMMUNISTS' CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO THE UNION OF

THE LEFT ELECTORAL STRATEGY AS WELL AS THE LOGIC OF PCF DEFENSE PROPOSITIONS. MITTERRAND HIMSELF ADDED THE MOST PENETRATING CRITIQUE IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED AUGUST 8, SIMULTANEOUSLY LAYING OUT HIS OWN POSITION IN THE MOST DETAIL TO DATE.

2. THE PS POSITION: SPEAKING OF THE FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE, MITTERRAND ANNOUNCED HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE FOUR PRINCIPLES DEVELOPED BY THE TRI-PARTY NEGOTIATING CONFIDENTIAL

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TEAMS:

-- RENUNCIATION (IN PRINCIPLE) OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

IN ANY FORM;

-- IMMEDIATE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE GENERAL DISARMAMENT;

-- MAINTENANCE OF THE NUCLEAR FORCE IN ITS CURRENT STATE OF CAPABILITY WHILE AWAITING DISARMAMENT;

-- RESERVING THE FINAL DECISION FOR THE FRENCH PEOPLE (AT AN UNSPECIFIED TIME AND BY UNSPECIFIED MEANS).

IN OPTING FOR SHORT-TERM MAINTENANCE, MITTERRAND HAS MOVED BEYOND THE LANGUAGE OF EXISTING COMMON PROGRAM (WHICH CALLS SIMPLY FOR RENUNCIATION) AND BEYOND THE REALM WHERE THE PARTY AS A WHOLE CAN BE COMMITTED. HE NOW SPEAKS OFFICIALLY ONLY FOR THE PS NATIONAL LEADERSHIP (WHICH IS GENERALLY UNITED ON THIS ISSUE), PENDING A NATIONAL CONVENTION TO BE HELD DECEMBER 11. WHILE THE PCF WAS ABLE TO MAKE ITS ABOUT-FACE IN A SINGLE

DAY ON MAY 11, THE PS, ACCORDING TO MITTERRAND, AFTER 20 YEARS OF FIGHTING AGAINST NUCLEAR ARMS, CANNOT REVISE ITS POSITION WITHOUT CONSULTING PARTY MEMBERS (THE DIRECTING COMMITTEE WILL DISTRIBUTE COMPETING MOTIONS IN SEPTEMBER, TO BE DEBATED BY SECTIONS AND FEDERATIONS IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER BEFORE THE DECEMBER CONVENTION).

3. THE ROAD TO NEUTRALITY: IN PRESENTING HIS POSITION, MITTERRAND POINTED OUT APPARENT DISCREPANCIES IN THE LOGIC OF PCF PROPOSITIONS. ALTHOUGH NOT DIRECTLY ACCUSING THE COMMUNISTS OF SEEKING A MORE NEUTRALIST POSITION, AS NATIONAL SECRETARY ROBERT PONTILLON HAD DONE JULY 23, MITTERRAND HAD HARSH CRITICISM FOR PCF
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PROPOSALS APPEARING TO LEAD TO THAT END:

-- "ALL AZIMUTHS" TARGETING: SAYING "I DON'T SEE THE NECESSITY FOR POINTING OUR MISSILES AT OUR OWN ALLIES," MITTERRAND ADDED THAT SUCH TARGETING IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE WITH NUCLEAR SUBMARINES.

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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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SECDEF WASHDC
USNMR SHAPE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PARIS 23164

-- ABANDONMENT OF ANTI-CITY STRATEGY: GIVEN THE PCF'S OWN DEMAND FOR THE SMALLEST FORCE POSSIBLE, AN ANTI-FORCE STRATEGY WOULD RENDER THE FRENCH FORCE USELESS.

-- LAUNCH DECISION BY COMMITTEE: ARGUING THAT THE COMMUNISTS'S COLLEGIAL DECISION- MAKING SCHEME (INVOLVING REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE GOVERNMENT) WOULD ROB THE NUCLEAR FORCE OF CREDIBILITY, MITTERRAND PROPOSED THAT THE PRESIDENT BE OBLIGED TO "CONSULT THE OPINIONS" OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND PERHAPS THE MILITARY CHIEF OF STAFF.
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-- NON FIRST- USE TREATY: ALTHOUGH FEASIBLE FOR THE SUPER-POWERS, RENUNCIATION OF FIRST USE WOULD DESTROY THE DETERRENT EFFECT OF THE FRENCH FORCE IN THE FACE OF AN ADVERSARY BETTER ARMED WITH CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS.

WHILE EFFECTIVELY DEMONSTRATING THE ILLOGICAL NATURE OF PCF PROPOSITIONS, THE CENTRAL THRUST OF MITTERRAND'S POSITION IS TO ARGUE AGAINST A FRENCH DEFENSE STANCE SO INDEPENDENT, SO BASED ON THE NUCLEAR FORCE ALONE, THAT FRANCE BECOMES IN EFFECT AN ARMED NEUTRAL DEFENDED ONLY BY A NOT VERY CREDIBLE NUCLEAR DETERRENCE.

4. MARCHAIS RESPONDS: IN A LENGTHY HUMANITE ARTICLE AUGUST 9, MARCHAIS CONTINUED HIS TELLING ATTACK ON THE REFERENDUM PROPOSAL, WHILE IGNORING ALMOST TOTALLY SOCIALIST CRITICISMS EMBODIED IN MITTERRAND'S INTERVIEW (HE DID REPEAT THAT FRANCE WOULD REMAIN IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE WHILE SEEKING DISSOLUTION OF ALL MILITARY BLOCS). A REFERENDUM, ACCORDING TO THE PCF LEADER, IS COMPLETELY EXTRANEIOUS IN THAT THE FRENCH PEOPLE WILL HAVE VOTED ON LEFT DEFENSE POLICY IN NEXT MARCH'S ELECTION. MARCHAIS VIEWS THE REFERENDUM CONCEPT AS A SMOKE SCREEN MASKING PS INDECISION AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, PS LACK OF COMMITMENT. IN THE LATTER CONTEXT, THE

DEFENSE DEBATE IS SYMPTOMATIC OF BIGGER PCF CONCERNS AS THE COMMUNISTS SEE THE CURRENT UPDATING PROCESS AS A LAST CHANCE TO EFFECTIVELY PIN DOWN SOCIALIST BEHAVIOR IN A LEFT GOVERNMENT. FOR THE PRESENT, THE PCF IS "TOTALLY OPPOSED" TO A REFERENDUM AND DEMANDS THAT LEFT DEFENSE POSITIONS, LIKE ALL OTHER ASPECTS OF THE LEFT PROGRAM, BE SPELLED OUT IMMEDIATELY IN "BLACK CONFIDENTIAL

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AND WHITE". AS WITH ALL UNITED LEFT ISSUES, THESE RATHER INTRANSIGENT POSITIONS ARE DESIGNED TO SERVE AS BARGAINING CHIPS AT THE SEPTEMBER SUMMIT.

5. THE COMMON DENOMINATOR: ALTHOUGH POLEMICS WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE UNTIL THE LEFT SUMMIT IN SEPTEMBER, THE BASIC FRAMEWORK FOR AN AGREEMENT SEEMS TO EXIST IN THE FOUR PRINCIPLES WORKED OUT BY THE NEGOTIATING TEAMS. MITTERRAND HAS GONE HIS LIMIT IN AGREEING TO COMMIT TO PAPER A POSITION ON MAINTENANCE OF THE FORCE WHICH ONLY THE PARTY LEADERSHIP ENDORSES SO FAR. ALTHOUGH SOME SIXTY PERCENT OF THE PS PROBABLY SUPPORTS MITTERRAND NOW, HE IS STILL CONSTRAINED AT PRESENT FROM CO-OPTING THE REMAINING FORTY PERCENT WHO RETAIN A STRONG ANTI-NUCLEAR, PACIFIST SENTIMENT. " LEAVING THE FINAL DECISION TO THE PEOPLE" HELPS NOT ONLY IN APPEASING THIS SOCIALIST MINORITY, BUT ALSO APPEALS TO THE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ECOLOGIST MOVEMENT. SUCH FUZZINESS, HOWEVER, IS NOT TO THE PCF'S LIKING AND LEADS TO SUSPICIONS THAT THE PS IS SEEKING FLEXIBILITY FOR ULTIMATELY GIVING IN TO THE "ATLANTICIST" TEMPTATION. ALTHOUGH MITTERRAND CAREFULLY BALANCES HIS STATEMENTS LIKE " NO REASON TO POINT MISSILES AT OUR ALLIES" WITH OTHERS ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF REINTEGRATION INTO NATO, THE COMMUNISTS CONTINUE TO PRESS THE POINT, PROBABLY TO ASSIST IN COMBATING SIMILAR REFORMIST, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC TENDENCIES WHICH THEY PERCEIVE WITHIN THE PS ON A WIDER SPECTRUM OF ISSUES. WHILE MITTERRAND STILL SEEMS LIKELY TO CARRY THE DAY CONCERNING THE MAINTENANCE OF THE NUCLEAR FORCE, FRENCH COMMITMENT TO THE EXISTING ALLIANCE SYSTEM, AND THE DETAILS OF NUCLEAR STRATEGY, THE REFERENDUM QUESTION WILL BE HARDER TO RESOLVE AND COULD FORCE A SOCIALIST RETREAT THE SEPTEMBER SUMMIT WHEN THIS AND OTHER ISSUES MUST BE IRONED OUT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEBATES, POLICIES, MILITARY PLANS
Control Number: n/a
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PARIS23164
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770286-0754
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
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Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PARIS 21872
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20-Oct-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1662977
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEFENSE DEBATE INTENSIFIES IN UNION OF THE LEFT
TAGS: PINT, MILI, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6d7b635f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009